



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on International Roma Day

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Hugh Neighbour
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 10, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Last Wednesday, April 8 marked the 18th annual commemoration of International Roma Day. Established in 1990 at the conference of the International Roma Union, the day is an opportunity to call attention to the history, experience and human rights concerns of one of Europe's largest ethnic minorities.

An estimated 8-10 million Roma live in Europe; more than 1 million live in the United States and Canada. Despite the progress that has been made over the past decade to improve the situation of Roma in Europe, many still live on the margins of society. Most lack access to social services, education and employment. Prejudice, hostile racial profiling, and other manifestations of societal and sometimes official discrimination persist. The United States remains committed to improving and protecting the human rights of Roma through the work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We also work with other intergovernmental organizations and NGOs to advocate for the rights of Romani groups across Europe.

We urge all states to reaffirm their commitments to build on the gains made to stem marginalization of Roma, to continue advancing tolerance, pluralism, and diversity, and to speak out against all disparaging expressions or acts of violence against all minorities.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.